A1

3. [(Amended)] Branched polymer according to [one or more of claims 1 and 2] claim 1, wherein the molecular weight of the polymer is 25,000 to 75,000, preferably 30,000 to 50,000.

4. Branched polymer according to [one or more of claims 1 to 3] claim 1, wherein component (A) is optionally a hydroxyalkyl or an alkyl polyalkylene glycol acrylate or methacrylate, a styrene or derivative thereof or a vinyl ether and component (B) is a poly(meth)acrylate with terminal (meth)acrylic function or a monovinyl-terminated polydimethylsiloxane and component (C) is N-vinylimidazole.

A2 B1

5. [(AMENDED)] Branched polymer according to [one or more of claims 1 to 4] claim 1, wherein this is present as a salt of a fatty acid, a hydroxycarboxylic acid, a sulfonic acid, a sulfate, an acidic phosphate or an inorganic acid.

6. Process for the production of a branched polymer, characterised in that

(A) 50 to 93 wt.% of at least one ethylenically unsaturated monomer,

(B) 2 to 25 wt.% of at least one ethylenically unsaturated macromonomer with a molecular weight of 1,000 to 20,000 and

(C) 5 to 25 wt.% of at least one polymerisable imidazole derivative

are polymerised by free-radical polymerisation in the presence of an organic solvant and at least one radical initiator, at a temperature of 50 to 180°C, and the polymer thus obtained is optionally converted to its salt.

7. Process according to claim 6, characterised in that the organic solvent is an ester and the radical initiator is a peroxide or an azo compound.

A3 B2

8. [(AMENDED)] Process according to [one or more of claims 6 and 7] claim 6, characterised in that the reaction temperature is 90 to 150°C.

A4 B2

12. [(NEW)] A paint, paste or modeling composition comprising a pigment and/or filler and a branched polymer according to claim 1, wherein the branched polymer is a dispersing agent.